

# BEHIND THE SCENES IN POLITICS

By ERNEST MC GAFFEY



"HELLO, Billy!"  
"How are you, Jack? Glad to see you." "You got that appointment, what is there in it for you?"  
"Four thousand a year."  
"Oh, I don't mean the salary—to be with the salary; but what is there in it for you on the side?"  
"Not a cent. Just the salary, that's all."  
"Come off! Why, two of that last bunch cleaned up ten thousand apiece before they walked the plank."  
"Well, it's a new deal. No side issues for me. Just the little old four thou. That's all."  
"Why, you ain't honest, are you, Jack?"  
"Well, I never had 'Honest John' tacked onto me for a handiwork, but I don't want to go along the street looking back to see if anyone's following me."  
"But those fellows are alive and well to-day, and the statute of limitations has run on 'em."  
"Yes, maybe; but it would be just my luck to get 'snaked.' My tailor says stripes are unbecoming on tall men, anyway."  
"You're foolish, Jack."

"A regular lobster, Billy; but when I'm let out I want to sleep nights, without listening for some one to ring the door-bell and ask 'how about it?'"  
The foregoing conversation is verbally a correct transcript between an appointee to a city office and a political acquaintance, the well-known and almost "disbarred" attorney, the Hon. William "Skipshank." It occurred just as written down, and is merely given to illustrate the general idea prevalent among the crooked, the crafty and the unscrupulous that public office was a private "snap."

The salary was supposed to be merely expense money for being in the political game; the real "money" was to be gotten out of "side deals," schemes where the official was to use his influence and his opportunities to get into "something good," whereby for favors either directly or indirectly granted he got what is known sometimes as his "rake-off," or his "bit."

If he was in a position where contracts were to be let "to the lowest bidder" it was his business, if a "grafter," to see that his "man" was the lowest bidder, or to have a "combination" among the bidders so that the contracts would be divided among two or three favored firms or individuals; or to work in some one as sub-contractor, or in various ways "get a finger in the pie," so that he could "help out" somebody for "a divvy."

Where individual officials had the entire control of their offices, their opportunities for "graft" were, of course, extensive; where officials were co-associated in city work, there had to be either a complete and general understanding as to "crooked work," or there might be "underhand work" by one or two men which was hidden from the rest.

The public had weird and unique ideas about "graft." The fact that "grafting" was carried on in city hall and city departments to a greater or less extent during every political administration was a fact that was undeniable. Sometimes an administration was especially corrupt; sometimes the administration was headed by a man who was even by his bitterest enemies acknowledged to be strictly honest. But as no one man could oversee the ins and outs of every department in the city, there was bound to be some "grafting," however petty, somewhere in the various offices or departments.

But the public generally seemed to be of the opinion that the instant a man was appointed or elected to office his entire nature changed. The people imagined, apparently, that a business man whose integrity, through many years, had never been questioned became "crooked" the instant he took the oath of office. And because of this, the most insulting and libelous statements were being bandied back and forth by irresponsible parties, concerning men who were honestly and conscientiously doing their duty in public offices.

Citizens who appropriated without any legal right the sidewalks in front of their stores for shipping purposes—men who would get an alderman for weeks in order to get a bay-window put in a downtown shop contrary to the ordinances, people who hung about the city hall from dawn to twilight trying to get a railroad pass, would enter a public office with the air of Daniel going down the elevator into the lions' den. And if a question was asked them when they stated their business, they always imagined it had a hint of graft in it. Well, now, let me tell you: These folks that are always scenting "graft" in every public office are always scenting "Holy Willies" that assume such an "uncolored" air, they are often the people that will bear watching themselves.



THE CHEAP GRAFTER NEVER HAS ANY FRIENDS

manipulated so that the ugly word "monopoly" can be eliminated in case of an exposure. Cash is a hard commodity to "juggle," but shares and stocks can be better explained to a jury. So only the ignorant or most brazen of the big "grafter" go after the money in the form of U. S. bank bills. Records are tell-tales; and money taken wrongfully and unaccounted for often returns to plague the hypocrite with a penitentiary sentence.

Another thing that seems to be overlooked is that legislation will not cure "grafting." True, it can and does punish the individual; but nothing but an aroused spirit of higher citizenship will effect a general cure of the evil. If you want to know how many people in your city and county are out after "something for nothing" get into a political position which either actually gives you chances for bestowing favors, or apparently offers the opportunity. Ninety-five per cent. of the people who call on you come for the purpose of having you do them some favor, either for themselves or others; and they are not at all particular about how the favor is done, so that it be done. For myself, I know I was bombarded day and night after I got into office with requests that ranged all the way from the impudent to the ignorant. Requests to aid in the way of evading or ignoring city ordinances were matters of daily occurrence. And the charming thing about it was that the parties assumed that this was a matter of course in the routine business of the city hall. It was not merely "what's the constitution between friends?" but "what's honesty between acquaintances?"

"Skate" No. 1 would introduce "Skate" No. 2, and the latter would unfold a scheme to "pull off" something in some other department of the city hall, which was not only against all canons of decency as regarded common honesty, but so ridiculously apparent that no one but an ignorant would conceit such a plan. Now these things happened so often that it was in a state of semi-apoplexy half the time. The only thing to do was to cut the interview short by saying "I haven't anything to do with that department; if you have any business with that end of the city go there yourself."

But when you come to pin down any great amount of "graft" in most of the city administrations offices you failed, from the simple reason that there was comparatively little of it. Was it because greater publicity and greater vigilance was being bandied through a hostile press and a watchful opposite party? Or was it because improvement was being made in the character of the men elected and appointed? Or was it both? At any rate, there was a steady advance for the better during the cycle of at least eight years of my experience in politics. Given an able and vigilant man at the head of a city's affairs, and "graft" will be reduced to a minimum during his term of office. Given any other kind of a man, and once more "graft" will lift its hydra head. It is a curious thing about manifestation, that the tendency to make "a little on the side" seems to be apparent in all administrations, but is either dormant or active as the man at the helm is either alert or inattentive. Like yellow fever in Cuba, it is always present, even if only one case of it.

any friends. In the first place, he had not stolen enough so as to lay away anything for high-priced lawyers, so he could neither pose as a martyr, nor go into court and make a fight for quite a while. Usually he "lost" his petty peculations were laughed at, and he found himself in the street, an object of contempt and jeers. But when a man had gotten away with forty or fifty thousand dollars, it was an entirely different proposition. He could then put up a good, stiff "bluff." In the first place, it was "up to him" to pooh-pooh all rumors or assertions which had been made against his office. Next, to explain that all this talk about "graft"

He had certainly not gone out of his way to meet her, nor tried to extend the acquaintance beyond the first meeting. And as for his foolish speech, it was preposterous to torture it into an offer of marriage. But there was her letter, and there was no mistaking its meaning.

"A mistake of the postman, of course," he thought at first, but the address on the envelope, "Mr. Richard Broadhurst, 54 George street," settled that point against him.

"No; it's intended for me. Now, this is a pretty situation. Has a man no protection against marriageable girls?"

The letter made it clear, provokingly clear, that Miss Virginia Hamilton looked upon him as a sutor, and that she was graciously yielding to his entreaties.

"Why one would think from this," he said, "that I had thrown myself at her feet and begged her to be my wife, when, confound her, I wouldn't—but what's the use of storming around about it? I must get this matter straightened out."

For Richard Broadhurst was the last man on earth who was thinking of marriage. But, after all, why not? The boldness of the thought both startled and amused him. It came back. Why not? He could not answer the question, although he called up all his old-time prejudices and all the arguments which to him had seemed to prove conclusively that he should never marry.

He remembered that Miss Virginia was not bad to look upon, that she gave evidences of refinement, and that her manner was pleasing. True, he had noticed a certain haughtiness in her bearing, but that, he thought, would be for the world and not for the man she loved. His old ideas about marriage might be all right so far as the rest of the women in the world was concerned, but Miss Virginia—well, that was another matter. A wife, after all—Miss Virginia were the wife—might not be the worst thing in the world.

After accepting his offer of marriage—which he had not made—Miss Virginia had written that she would remain with her aunt in New York till a week before the wedding, the date of which, he learned from her letter, was three months hence.

Broadhurst had met the young woman but once, and then by the merest chance. He had done her some little service and been rewarded with a smile and gracious thanks. With that he had dismissed the matter from his mind. A friend had happened on the scene in time to present him; the young woman had said it was a pity that he should have been put to so much trouble on her account, and he had recited a foolish speech—he had read it in a French novel—to the effect that any man should consider it an honor to be her slave.

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"I suppose," she had written, "that you will call upon your old friend Mr. Gay to act as groomsmen. Mr. Gay was the friend who had introduced them."

"Evidently," Broadhurst laughed, "there isn't much for the modern groom to do but to appear at the right time and put his neck into the yoke. The bride-to-be picks out the groom, hints at whom she would like to be 'best man,' names the place and date of the wedding, and looks after things generally. But for the fact that there couldn't very well be a wedding without a groom, I suppose they would eliminate him. But I'll let Miss Virginia manage this little affair."

He was in a fever of excitement till Gay's answer came, but it reassured him. It was as follows:

"Old hand at the business, and will see you through it. Congratulate you on the bride you are to get. Now, old man, keep cool and don't get excited. Above all, don't do foolish things. Just buy your wedding clothes, be sure to get here on time, and don't worry about anything else. I will attend to all little details."

He then gave minute instructions as to the clothes the groom should wear. "Really, he's an accommodating fellow," Broadhurst thought, "but I should like to have something to say in this matter. The groom seems to be almost as unimportant a factor in a wedding as an unpreferred creditor where the assets are ten cents on the dollar."

Then followed three months of ecstasy, intermixed at times, it is true, with the fear that something might dash the cup of newly-found bliss from his lips.

The weeks passed without Broadhurst hearing again from Gay or from Miss Virginia. A week before the date of the wedding, he thought that perhaps he ought to go over and see them, but feared to intrude. They were busy, no doubt, with the arrangements, and would not care to be bothered by one who was to play the minor part of groom. So, impatient though he was, he concluded to wait his cue before appearing on the scene. Then, there were his own arrangements to look after. For the fifth time he received the solemn assurance of his tailor that his wedding clothes were perfect.

Finally, his wedding day arrived, and he was at the railroad station two hours before the time for the train to leave. Once on the train, he took a seat, but soon left it, to find the conductor and ask him when he would reach his destination. True, he had been consulting the time-table for days, but now feared that he might have made a mistake in reading it; and then it might be necessary to send a message asking them to delay the ceremony until he could arrive. His fears on this point quieted, he again took his seat, but it occurred to him that the locomotive might be in a bad way and cause the train to lose time. But the conductor said the locomotive was never in better condition.

Half way between his home and that of Miss Virginia the train stopped. He rushed out of the coach with a hundred questions on his tongue. What had caused the delay? Would it be a long one? Was there a telegraph office near?

His worst fears were realized. Something had gone wrong with a freight train, and the way was blocked. It was

He rushed out of the coach with a hundred questions. Several miles to the nearest telegraph office.

The wedding was set for eight o'clock that evening, and it was ten minutes past nine when Broadhurst leaped from a cab in front of Miss Virginia's home, turned to pay the driver of the foaming horses and ran up the steps of the house. His ring was answered immediately, and he almost rushed into the arms of his friend Gay. He thought his friend seemed somewhat surprised at his arrival.

"I hope I am not so very late?" he gasped.

"The ceremony is over," Gay said, "but you are in time to offer your congratulations. Come this way."

A wedding without a groom was something Broadhurst had not heard of, but he asked no questions. He was in some doubt as to whom he should offer his congratulations—whether to the bride, his mother-in-law or himself, and while he was trying to settle this point in his mind, he was ushered into the presence of the bride and of a gentleman who was a stranger to him.

The bride came forward and gave her hand. Broadhurst thought she might receive her future husband with a little more cordially than her manner indicated. To relieve the embarrassment of the situation, he ventured to extend his congratulations, and was glad to perceive that it must have been the proper thing to do, since the bride received them most graciously. Then, with the remark, "I want you to meet my husband," she led him towards the gentleman who had been with her when he entered the room.

After he had been presented, his friend Gay remarked to Virginia's husband:

"You have my friend here—whose name, by the way, is the same as your own, Richard Broadhurst—to thank for rescuing your bride, some time ago, when a team of horses threatened to run her down."

Broadhurst did not catch the other's reply; he was dazed. Gay laid his hand upon Broadhurst's shoulder, saying in alarm:

"Dick, you're ill."

"Nothing serious," he replied; "it will soon pass away. If you will excuse me, I will step outside."

"Funny thing," said Gay, speaking to Broadhurst a few days later. "Broadhurst—that's the other fellow, not you," with a laugh—"had been trying to win Miss Hamilton's heart for a year before she consented to marry him. Well, just about the time you met her, she concluded to accept him, and after she got to New York wrote to him to that effect. He did not get the letter, and renewed his pleadings. Again she accepted him. Broadhurst wired to me, asking me to be 'best man,' and I promptly accepted. In a few days, I was surprised to get a letter from him with the same request. I concluded the dear fellow, in his joy, was losing his mind."

"Now, the strange part of it is that Broadhurst protests that he did not receive Miss Hamilton's first letter, and that he communicated but once with me; whereas his wife is positive that she accepted him twice, and I could swear that I promised as often to act as 'best man.'"

"What was your friend's address?" Broadhurst asked.

"No, 54 Georgia street."

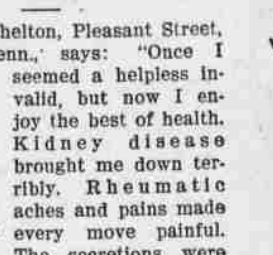
Broadhurst said nothing, but meditated upon how easy it would be to make a mistake and write "George" instead of "Georgia."

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### ASKING FOR ONE.



He—If we were not in a canoe I would kiss you.  
She—Take me ashore instantly, sir!

### HEALTH BRINGS HAPPINESS.

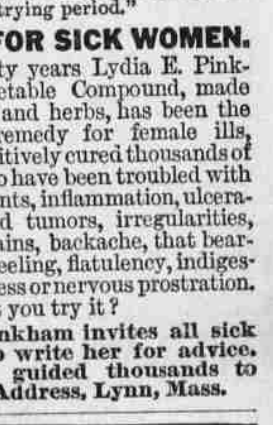
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## IS HAUNTED BY GIRL'S GHOST

Spectral Form That Inhabits Old Forts at Southwick.

Southwick, the pretty little seaside resort a few miles from Brighton, England, has found out that it has a ghost, and efforts are being made by the inhabitants to discover its identity.

The story of the discovery is told by a correspondent of the Hove Gazette, who states that one evening recently he visited the disused forts at Southwick in company with a friend.

"It was horribly ghastly and grim. It seemed to come from the far end of the room, and slowly approach us. I must say I was dreadfully afraid, and my young friend, who had just remarked: 'Oh, this would be a capital spot for a ghost,' shook all over and nearly fainted."

"The figure was tall, and its covering, as far as one could see, was extremely thin."

"An old Southwick boatman told us a wonderful yarn about a young soldier who had rowed a beautiful maid over the bar late one night and had

crucially murdered her there, and ever since her spirit had haunted the fort."

"I think there is no doubt that the peculiar spectral form which we saw in the room of the old fort was the spirit of the dead and long-forgotten maiden."

Like Fighting Like.

"On the new sheath skirts—" suggested the fashionable dressmaker, tentatively.

The police official, stern in his sense of duty, frowned.

"It is war to the knife," he declared.